

News Release

Senator Pete V. Domenici

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 2, 2000

DOMENICI SAYS CLINTON AND ALLIES ARE "IRRESPONSIBLE" WITH VETO AND OVERRIDE FAILURE ON NUCLEAR WASTE BILL

Senator Says Avoiding Issue Puts Future Nuclear Energy Options in Peril

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today charged that President Clinton and his congressional allies are "irresponsible" in their unyielding opposition to allowing the nation to responsibly address its nuclear waste problems.

Domenici today argued and voted for the Senate to override the President's April 25 veto of S.1287, the **Nuclear Waste Policy Amendments Act**. The Senate failed to override the veto on a 64 to 35 vote, three short of the 67-vote total needed to enact the bill into law.

Domenici said continued failure to deal with the federal government's commitment to store nuclear waste will, in the long run, put the American nuclear industry in peril and leave waste strewn around the nation at 80 sites in 40 states.

"It is simply irresponsible for the Clinton administration and its allies in Congress to avoid all attempts at improving our handling of spent nuclear fuel. In the long run, I think it is a big mistake on an issue that is not going away," Domenici said.

"This bill was our first opportunity for real progress on nuclear waste issues during the Clinton administration. Our failure to enact the bill over the president's objection just prolongs the status quo, namely turning a blind eye to an energy source that should be key to our future energy strategy," he said.

"More and more Americans believe nuclear energy is safe and favor licensing new power plants. Nuclear energy is a clean source of power, without releasing greenhouse gasses, with a superlative safety record over the last decade," he continued. "But without some near-term waste solution, like interim storage or an early receipt facility, we are killing this option."

The vetoed bill, a compromise measure which had passed both the Senate and House by overwhelming majorities, would have established a schedule for a Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear waste disposal program. It also authorized an "early receipt" facility at Yucca Mountain, Nev., to be

operational by 2007, well in advance of permanent storage at that site commencing no earlier than 2010.

The vetoed bill included a forward-looking Domenici-authored provision to establish a DOE *Office of Spent Nuclear Fuel* to develop and implement a 15-year program to evaluate the nation's options for treatment, recycling, and disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high-level wastes. This research would include a study of technologies to greatly reduce the toxicity of nuclear waste and find ways to use it as an energy resource.

"Some very large range concessions were incorporated in this bill, concessions that met every one of the administration's advertised concerns. Unfortunately, as we've seen before, this administration is so determined to undercut the role of nuclear energy, that new objections were invented faster than concessions were granted," Domenici said. "I'm disappointed with the doomed veto override vote. Unfortunately, the administration has been consistently negligent to the nation's overall energy policy needs—whether they be nuclear, oil and gas, or coal."